

Amendments To The Claims:

1.-3. (canceled)

4. (previously presented) A method for relaying Internet Protocol (IP) packets to an external control component assigned to a network node in a communication network, the communication network having a plurality of network nodes and switching IP packets, the method comprising:

- receiving an in-band IP signaling packet at an external interface of the network node;
- connecting the external interface to the external control component;
- identifying the packet based on a protocol field of a header in the packet;
- inserting a value uniquely assigned to the receiving external interface into a field of the header or an IP header in the packet, the value different than another value assigned to a non-receiving external interface of the network node;
- identifying the packet as an RSVP (Resource Reservation Protocol) type of packet;
- modifying a DSCP (Differentiated Services Code Point) field in the header of the packet as a function of the receiving external interface, wherein the DSCP field contains the value uniquely assigned to the receiving external interface; and
- routing the modified packet to the external control component connected to the external interface, and thus relaying Internet Protocol (IP) packets to the external control component assigned to the network node.

5. (cancelled)

6. (cancelled)